

FIRE IN ROOM WITH COFFIN.

BLECKER STREET AGHAST AT THE OMEN OF ILL.

All the Plans for a Great Funeral for Michele Scarfa Halted and Few Followed the Coffin When New Arrangements Were Made—Damage Eight.

When Michele Scarfa, who was 65 years old and one of the most respected members of the Italian colony in Blecker street, died last Friday, Blecker street went into mourning. Scarfa had many friends, and when they heard of his death they stood in groups on the street corners and talked of what a fine funeral he would have. Even the children mourned him, for Scarfa, who had retired with enough to live on ten years ago, often sat in the doorway of his home at 176 Blecker street and distributed sweets to the youngsters. "Il Padre" they called him in the neighborhood.

Scarfa's funeral was fixed for yesterday and on Saturday decorators went to work preparing the house for it. The old man's room in which the wake was to be held was stripped of its furniture and its four walls hung from floor to ceiling with heavy black drapery. Across the window where the head of the coffin was to be hung a piece of cloth on which was a cross done in gilt thread.

The body was put in this room, from which all the light had been shut out, after the Italian style. At the head of the coffin stood a tall brass candelabrum with thirteen immense candles.

While these preparations were being made inside there was no lack of attention to the ceremonies outside. The Italian Benefit Society, to which the old man belonged, ordered thirty carriages and a brass band. One hundred friends were to have walked behind the hearse to show their respect.

On Saturday night, when all these arrangements for the funeral had been completed, scores of the old man's friends trooped up the narrow stairs of the tenement leading to the rooms on the second floor. They had come for the wake to be held in the black draped bedroom which had been made to look like a tomb. All night long the wake went on. When daylight came nearly everybody went home to prepare for the funeral.

There were only about ten persons in the room with the coffin at ten o'clock yesterday morning, when some one opened the window behind the drapery to get some air. In a minute the breeze had caught the hanging with the cross embroidered on it and had swung it over the thirteen candles.

There was a burst of flame and the fire began to spread all over the room. Those inside the room began to scream. The crowd in the street outside heard their cries and looked up to see the room in which the corpse lay ablaze. As the people looked, through the window the flames were seen spreading to the pall over the coffin and beginning to burn the floral wreaths while smoke and flame poured out.

Blecker street, which was quiet with Sunday churchgoers, suddenly became alive with lamentations, and as they shrieked, women and men came from the street and crowded themselves at the spectacle of the flames burning up the cross and blackening the big brass crucifix. It was a terrible sight, and the crowd outside superstitious ones said. The street soon was packed with people.

Some of those who had first seen the blaze, including a man named Wallace, a Mercer street station, had rushed up the narrow stairway to the flame filled room. The mourners, who had been when the fire started, stood outside and looked on in grief to do anything—all but Angelo Scarfa, the old man's son. He rushed back into the room, tore down the blazing drapery with the gilt cross on it and threw it out of the window, down on the heads of the crowd below. In doing so his hands were severely burned.

Then they threw out the pall that had covered the coffin and the wreaths that had been on it. They fell and burned in the street. But he was unable to move the coffin himself, and the crowd outside seemed too dazed to help him until Policeman Wallace rushed in.

Wallace seized one end of the coffin and with the help of one who was born out of the room just in time. The coffin was badly scorched, but the corpse was untouched.

An alarm was turned in and the fire was kept to the room in which it had started. When the firemen left, the room that had been so elaborately decorated was a mass of wreckage.

Scarfa and a few friends afterward cleared it out as best they could, and the undertaker, who was sent for rehung it with white draperies he could find, then the body was put back in the room.

The funeral was held in the afternoon, but many of the old man's friends did not come. There were only a few, and the order for the band was cancelled. Only thirty men walked on foot behind the hearse to St. Ann's church.

It must have been an evil sign, "some of them said. "Therefore we did not care to go to the funeral."

THE SEAGUERS.

Hannis Taylor, F. Marion Crawford and Prince Andre Poniatowsky Arrive.

Four liners drifted in from the mists to the eastward yesterday morning bearing everything except news. It is the dull season on shipboard. There were comparatively few cabin passengers and less than 1,000 in the steerage of the big quartet. This is as it generally is in the latter days of July.

Aboard the White Star liner Arabis, from Liverpool and Queenstown, were the Hon. Hannis Taylor, former Minister to Spain, F. Marion Crawford, Mr. and Mrs. Work, and Walter W. Hays.

Mr. Taylor said he had come home for business reasons. He received the degree of LL.D. from the University of Edinburgh, and he was to be knighted in London, a similar honor from the Dublin University, but could not do so because of his engagements. He will go to Dublin in the fall to receive his Irish degree.

Aboard the American liner New York, which had been undergoing repairs at Belfast since March, were Prince Andre Poniatowsky, Mrs. S. W. Mitchell, R. V. Day, the Viscount and Viscountess Clinchamps, F. Marion Crawford, Mrs. E. La Montagne and Mr. and Mrs. R. P. Murphy.

THE ALABAMA HAILSTORM.

Damage to Corn, Cotton and Other Crops Estimated at \$300,000.

MOBILE, July 24.—Details from the hailstorm that passed over southeast Alabama yesterday have been received here. Corn was torn and shattered to pieces, cotton was stripped of the green foliage and the bare stalks left as evidence of the severity of the storm. The loss on cotton is estimated at \$100,000, and the loss on other crops, including corn and sorghum, at \$200,000. Hail fell as large as hens' eggs and many stones yet remain on the ground. All the sufferers are land renters. An appeal for aid is made.

Bather Drowned in the Surf.

LEWES, Del., July 24.—Edward Martin, a prominent athlete and society man of Seaford, Del., was drowned at Rehoboth today. The sea was running tremendously strong and breaking with great force on the beach, causing a powerful undertow, but in the face of these conditions Martin and three companions went in to bathe. The current carried him beyond his depth and all efforts to get him ashore failed. His body was not recovered. He was a son of the late Congressman Martin of Seaford.

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Saitto is a thick-set, heavy man, and although his antagonist weighed 170 pounds he pushed him back against a bootblack stand, where he fell on top of him, each still clutching for the revolver. The man was dead by the time the policeman had pulled Saitto away. A bullet had penetrated his abdomen. His opponent was painfully, but not seriously, shot in the right shoulder.

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"But I'll not accept him," replied Magistrate Flammer. "He's a bad man."

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